

Sent to Washington 3/20/95

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form**

CLICK HERE for Multiple Property Listing,
Historic Resources of the Chicago Park District
Multiple Property Submission"

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Portage Park

other names/site number Park #147

2. Location

street & number 4100 N. Long Avenue not for publication

city or town Chicago vicinity

state Illinois code IL county Cook code 031 zip code 60641

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

William L. Wheeler, SHPO 3-17-95
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Illinois Historic Preservation Agency

State of Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register
 See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Portage Park
Name of Property

Cook County, Illinois
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
4	0	buildings
1	0	sites
4	1	structures
4	0	objects
13	1	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

The Historic Resources of the Chicago Park District 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

LANDSCAPE/park
RECREATION AND CULTURE/outdoor recreation
RECREATION AND CULTURE/sports facility

LANDSCAPE/park
RECREATION AND CULTURE/outdoor recreation
RECREATION AND CULTURE/sports facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th and Early 20th Century
American Movements/Prairie School

foundation concrete
walls brick

roof clay tile
other vegetation
stone/limestone
metal/copper

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

- Social History
- Entertainment/Recreation
- Landscape Architecture
- Architecture

Period of Significance

1912-1944

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Hatzfeld, Clarence/architect
American Park Builders Inc./landscape
Nelson, Melvin A./architect

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Portage Park
Name of Property

Cook County, Illinois
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 36.52

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1

1	6
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4	3	6	4	4	0
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4	6	4	5	0	5	0
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3

1	6
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4	3	6	8	5	0
---	---	---	---	---	---

4	6	4	4	6	6	0
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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Kaaren Dodge and Sarah E. Polster/MS-Historic Preservation School of the Art Institute of Chicago
organization Chicago Park District/Julia Sniderman date November 1994
street & number 425 E. McFetridge Drive telephone (312) 294-2226
city or town Chicago state Illinois zip code 60605

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional Items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Chicago Park District
street & number 425 E. McFetridge Drive telephone (312) 747-0551
city or town Chicago state Illinois zip code 60605

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Portage Park

Portage Park is a 36.52 acre site, located on the northwest side of Chicago at 4000-North and 5600-West. Portage Park, along with Chopin, Shabbona, and Wilson Parks, is a neighborhood park created by the Portage Park District which was established in 1912. These park sites were meant to provide local neighborhoods with a strong sense of community and to serve as incentives for additional real estate development.

Even before the purchase of the Portage Park property had been finalized, the American Park Builders were hired to draft a park plan. This 1912 design provided for sunken lawns in the southeastern corner, a large centrally located athletic field, a lagoon for boating and skating extending along the northern boundary, outdoor gymnasiums for men, women and children along the western boundary, a swimming pond with sand beach on the eastern side, and a field house. The landscape plan included a perimeter planting of trees and shrubs to provide a sense of privacy and enclosure. A number of the features shown on the original 1912 design may not have been implemented. However, by 1913, commissioners reported that "considerable work of a permanent nature has been done, such as removing the old buildings, leveling and grading grounds and filling the old ditch along Irving Park boulevard, constructing over 1300 feet of cement walk, planting trees, laying out baseball diamonds, 1/4 mile running track and tennis courts." (First Annual Portage Park Labor Day Celebration program, 1913)

Improvements continued and by 1922 the Portage Park Pool fieldhouse, designed by Clarence Hatzfeld, architect of many fieldhouses in Chicago, was completed. In 1928 a gymnasium, designed by Clarence Hatzfeld and of similar Prairie School design, was constructed in the park. Following the 1934 consolidation of the separate Chicago parks commissions into the Chicago Park District, funding from the Works Progress Administration (WPA) made possible a number of additional improvements in Portage Park. These included the 1936 construction of the two stone gateways along Irving Park Boulevard, rockeries, limestone display fountains, and a stone pergola. Other improvements included a spray pool masonry pergola, flood lights, permanent benches and ball field bleachers.

Over the decades, both landscape and buildings in Portage Park have undergone some modifications and loss of original fabric in response to frequently changing community needs. In spite of these alterations and the decline of landscape vegetation, essential character defining features such as historic roads and paths, buildings, structures, landforms, water features and some plant material remain intact. The park has numerous contributing features and continues to retain a high degree of integrity.

In order to clearly describe Portage Park and show that it retains sufficient integrity to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places, three corresponding plans are being submitted as part of this nomination: the original plan of 1912 proposed by the American Park Builders [A]; the WPA survey made in 1938 [B]; and the more recent site plan drawn in 1985 [C]. For additional clarity, the park will be described in terms of five separate sections: northeast, northwest, southeast, southwest, and the central ball field. These divisions relate to the Portage Park street

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plan following a line on a axis with North Linder and Warner Avenues. The ball field is treated as a separate section. Individual features will be keyed in the text using numbers within brackets.

Portage Park is bound by Berteau Avenue on the north, Long Avenue on the east, Irving Park Boulevard on the south and Central Avenue on the west. The park featured a network of pedestrian pathways with four primary walkways extending diagonally in from the corners of the property and then circling a central ball park set diagonally on axis. Their current placement and use indicates a slight redesign of the historic plan, yet the basic circulation system has remained a constant. [A & C]

The 1912 plan [A] proposed a long vehicle drive [1] extending east and west across the northern boundary and spanning diagonally from the northwest to the southeast corner. The actual construction of that drive plan is not verifiable. The 1938 survey shows the major drive only running through the northeast section, entering at the corner of W. Berteau Avenue and N. Long Avenue leading to the fieldhouse, also located in the northeast section, and turning north to Berteau Ave. past the on-site parking lot, just north of the fieldhouse [C]. This is the appearance of the drive today.

Since the 1930s the perimeter landscape along Irving Park Boulevard has featured the more restful and passive side of this park plan. The naturally flat topography of the site was enhanced with selective berms, shrub clusters, and vistas enframed with elms and maples and with the creation of formal allees [2] [3] which directed the pedestrian away from the city streets down shaded walkways past open meadows [4] [5] and around the open sunlit central ball field [13]. Although vegetation is sparse now, these basic spatial landscapes treatments remain today.

As part of the original 1912 design [A] Portage Park featured three formal entries along Irving Park Boulevard. The main entry [6] was centered in the middle of the block and provided a large and inviting entrance to the public promenade. This allee has undergone at least two redesigns. Originally it offered entry along a semi-circular path lined with shrubs (as foreground) and a monoculture of Siberian Elm trees (as middle ground), directed the pedestrian into the interior areas of the park. Between the parallel paths was a grassy lawn. The 1938 [B] survey shows this semicircular entry with the addition of a centrally located drinking fountain. The pathways at that time were delineated with hedges and shrubs with formal flower beds and a fish pool [fig 1]. The walkway terminated at a semicircular cement platform from which four asphalt pathways radiated.

Archival photographs from the WPA period document the construction of a stratified limestone or "flagstone" gateway, flower bed edging, fish pond surround, and pergola in 1936 at this entry [fig 2]. This irregular coursed stone treatment appears to have been built upon the original foundations of the earlier structures as shown on the 1912 plan. The 1936 limestone constructs were built with walls of horizontally laid and mortared stones, capped and trimmed with limestone slabs placed on edge to create a knife-like effect. Today the pergola, formal flower

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beds, hedging, and fish pool are gone. Fortunately, the original pathways and limestone constructs remain. The allee is currently lined with a monoculture of Siberian Elms, which offers that same sense of spatial relationship and formal entry as existed earlier in the 1930s [fig 3].

Another formal allee into Portage Park was planned at the corner of Irving Park Boulevard and N. Central Avenue [3]. Here in the southwest section, the pedestrian was invited into the park along a single pathway between two sunken lawns [8], trapezoidal in shape. The original planting palette is unknown, however a monoculture of catalpa trees lined the allee in the 1930s. The WPA survey also shows fish ponds centered within each sunken area with simple concrete surrounds. In 1936 irregular limestone work was built upon these surrounds changing them into whimsical spray fountains [9]. The stone treatment was also used in the construction of formal entry gates [7] at this corner. Today the plantings along the tree lined allee feature a combination of maples and elms offering a continuity in design intent. The fountain basins are intact but have been converted to planting beds. The stonework needs some repair but the historical fabric remains.

The third entry [10] along Irving Park Boulevard, is at the corner of N. Long Avenue and Irving Park Boulevard. The 1912 plan proposed a vehicle entry here with pedestrian pathways running parallel with the roadway. This vehicle road and entry, if even implemented, was altered in 1928 when a mounted cannon was installed on the corner, closing off the roadway opening. The existing pathways, which entered the park at this corner, were documented in 1938 by the WPA [B] showing a redesign from the 1912 proposal [A]. Today the pathways remain as they were in the 1930s but the cannon mount has been removed with the circular footprint still visible marking its previous site [C].

The 1922 Portage Park fieldhouse [11], designed by architect Clarence Hatzfeld is located within the northeast section of Portage Park. Hatzfeld was responsible for designing 21 fieldhouses for the parks of seven north and northwest park commissions, as well as designing numerous houses and apartment buildings in the adjacent neighborhoods. The Portage Park fieldhouse is a two-story Prairie School style structure of wire cut variegated pressed red brick, laid with red mortar, and trimmed with limestone sills, coping, and ornament. The hip roof has wide overhanging eaves and is clad with green pan tiles. The main (west) entry is at the second floor level and long screen walls encloses open air changing rooms, symmetrically arranged at both ends of the building. Four brick lanterns with green tile roofs join the screen walls to the main section of the building. The windows are double hung with 6/6 lights. The flashing and gutters are copper. A curving stairway once lead visitors to a middle landing or loggia which served as a band stand and community platform. The exterior of the fieldhouse has been well maintained but the original curving stairway was removed in 1974 and replaced with new concrete stairs in a three tier configuration. In 1959 a canvas tent roof was designed to enclose the open air changing areas.

The interior plan of the fieldhouse provides a lobby, meeting rooms and offices with terrazzo floors and plastered walls and ceiling. The wooden doors and trim have not been painted and the stain finish is original. The main level offers a large meeting room (with a capacity for 150

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people) with several smaller office and meeting room spaces. Games rooms and lockers are located on the ground floor. Minor remodeling took place in the 1960s altering the kitchen and craft rooms in an effort to keep the facilities current with the community needs, yet the building retains sufficient integrity of the historic interior design.

In 1916 a small sand-bottomed lagoon and sand beach was open to the public for bathing and escape from the hot summer heat. It was located within the southern portion of the northwest section. The 1912 plan [A] shows a lagoon with four interconnected lakes planned for this area of Portage Park. It is difficult to determine just how much of the water plan was implemented.[A] However, in Hatzfeld's site plan of 1922 for the fieldhouse, a portion of the existing pond [12] was documented as being located to the northeast of the proposed fieldhouse structure. Later in 1959, an Olympic-sized swimming pool was built on the site of the old pond [B]. Currently there is an Olympic-sized concrete swimming pool with an adjacent high dive pool, a viewing veranda and wooden catwalks on the site [C]. The construction of these pool additions did not alter the east elevation of the fieldhouse.

The original 1912 plan [A] proposed an elliptical shaped ball field. This open meadow defined by paths and plantings is centered on the axis to each park corner [13]. Walkways fed into this area and defined its shape as they skirted the circumference. The 1922 construction of the fieldhouse altered the configuration of the original playing field, making it more irregular in shape. In addition, the 1938 WPA survey showed bike paths dissecting this ball field area with heavy plantings of maples and elms in the southern half [B]. Today the dissecting path and plantings have been removed in order to accommodate five softball fields [C] and the original 1912 elliptical shape has been restored recapturing the original historical design.

The 1937 annual report minutes details the construction of grandstand bleachers at the northwest corner of the ball field creating a formal viewing stand in front of the gymnasium. The recreational needs of the changing community have required additional playing field areas and the removal of the formal grandstands. Concrete and wood bleachers are, however, currently located southwest of the ball field and may be sections of this earlier grandstand structure.

The Portage Park gymnasium [14] was built in 1928 by Chicago architect Clarence Hatzfeld. It was diagonally placed facing the ball field in the northeast section of the park. Following his earlier construct in the park, Hatzfeld made a deliberate effort to use similar design elements in this building. In elevation the exterior of the hipped roof central pavilion is two stories on a raised basement. Single story flat roof wings flank this central section creating a symmetrical plan. The walls are of variegated brown-green pressed brick with a limestone face on the raised basement. The recessed entry has a limestone surround with two octagonal limestone columns, and corner pilasters. At the corner of each wing are hipped roof lanterns roofed with green tile. The major windows have limestone surrounds. All windows are double hung with wood frames in a three over three configuration. The hipped roof is clad in green pantiles. Copper was used for flashing and gutters.

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The interior public spaces of the Gymnasium have terrazzo floors and plaster wall surfaces. Locker rooms, offices and restrooms are located on the first floor. Within the second floor gym the walls are of light cream brick. The roof structure is exposed revealing steel trusses and a pine ceiling. A balcony observation area is suspended from the roof trusses. Under the gymnasium in the basement is the indoor concrete swimming pool which is partially illuminated with side wall windows. The building today is well maintained and continues to convey its historical character.

To the south of the gymnasium, within the southwest quadrant, is the children's play area. The 1912 plan documents that its original site has been maintained. Three constructs remain within this area of the park: the wading or spray pool and sand pit [15] and shelter or pool pergola [16]. The shelter is a rectilinear structure of brown brick pier supports with an open gable wood frame roof. The roof trusses are 4x4 members and the roof is clad in green asphalt roofing. The condition of this pergola is fair with a deteriorated roof membrane. The pergola and the wading pool have undergone some repairs yet these structures have remained constant with the 1938 plan [B].

An existing one story comfort station [17], located across from the children's play area is also documented in the 1938 WPA survey. The walls are redish-brown brick, Bedford limestone sills and the hipped roof is clad in green asphalt roofing. Although the building is in generally fair condition with considerable roof deterioration, it retains good integrity .

With the 1934 consolidation of the separate Chicago parks districts, funding from the WPA made possible many ancillary improvements in the park which are considered to be contributing resources. They include: three utilitarian metal towers with tripod flood lights [18], six rectangular lawn areas delineated by low concrete and wood elements defined as horseshoe courts [19], and an L-shaped brick, flat roofed, one-story brick service building with extending walls that define the service yard. The service building was built on an existing parking lot site.[20]. Along the eastern perimeter improvements included: tennis courts [21] and a parking lot [22]. All have been maintained and help define the historic character of Portage Park.

Over the years, Portage Park has continued to accommodate the shifting recreational needs of the surrounding community while retaining its essential historic character. The landscape and built structures reflect the neighborhoods changing recreational needs, from the economic boom of the 1920s, to the WPA of the Great Depression era of the 1930s, to its current service in the community, yet the basic park plan remains the same. In spite of the decline of landscape, essential character defining features such as historic pathways, formal allees, distinctive buildings, whimsical stone entries and fountains, functional structures, sunken landforms, water features and some plant material remain intact. The park has numerous contributing features and continues to retain a high degree of integrity.

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List of Resources in Portage Park

Contributing Resources

Buildings

Fieldhouse [11]
Gymnasium [14]
Service building [20]
Comfort station [17]

Sites

Landscape/Park

Structures

Pool Pergola [16]
3 Floodlight towers [18]

Objects

2 Display fountains [9]
2 Entry gate structures [6] [7]

Non-contributing Resources

Pool [12]

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Portage Park meets with Criterion A and Criterion C for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. The property is significant for its function and use as one of the 19 Chicago independent pre-consolidation park districts, associated with the neighborhood parks movement. Portage Park was essentially created in response to residents' desires, and its development continued to reflect the strong needs of the surrounding middle-class community as a meeting place, playground and educational center. Portage Park qualifies for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under the Multiple Property Documentation Form entitled "The Historic Resources of the Chicago Park District."

In addition to its local significance in social history and recreation, Portage Park demonstrates local significance in landscape design and architecture. It is important that at the park's origin in 1912 the community specifically hired a design/build landscape firm, American Park Builders Inc. It is uncertain exactly how much of that plan was initially implemented, but later additions do follow and build upon that design. The 1922 fieldhouse was designed by Clarence Hatzfeld, a prominent architect of many Chicago neighborhood park structures. This fieldhouse, along with the gymnasium building, are excellent local examples of late Prairie School design. Finally, distinctive and unusual stonework that was constructed as a Works Progress Administration project of the late 1930s remains as an important historic landscape element.

Overall, Portage Park is an excellent example, both in social studies and design, of the recreation parks in Chicago that were created in the 1910s. The property's period of significance spans from 1912, when the land was acquired and initial park features were implemented, to 1944, the 50-year cutoff date for the National Register. In subsequent years, the park has continued to accommodate a variety of community needs, in some cases altering the landscape. But the alterations and loss of vegetation are not irreversible and do not detract from the park's historic character.

In the early 19th century the Portage Park community area was a flat marshy prairie northwest of Chicago transversed by two parallel ridges--now Cicero and Narragansett avenues--that formed a natural watershed (The Chicago Fact Book Consortium 1984, 38). The settlement grew slowly up to the turn of the century, but settlers were encouraged by the easy accessibility to the area from Chicago due to the Northwest Plank Road (now Milwaukee Avenue) and several railroad lines. Subdivided developments began taking shape in the 1870s and '80s, mostly settled

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by Germans, English and Swedes (The Chicago Fact Book Consortium 1984, 38).

As explained in the Multiple Property Documentation Form, "The Historic Resources of the Chicago Park District" (Section E: 13), around the turn of the century the idea of neighborhood parks was gaining popularity, and residents of areas not served by the existing commissions began pursuing means of establishing such parks in their own neighborhoods. Portage Park is one such neighborhood park where the residents' demands catalyzed the park formation.

In 1889 the community was annexed into Chicago and in 1895, due to the increasing demands for parks in the city, the Illinois State Legislature approved an act to create 19 new park commissions in Chicago (Breen 1941). Most of the new commissions were on the north and northwest sides. Interestingly, the neighborhood today called Portage Park was initially part of the Irving Park neighborhood and gained its separate identity due to the creation of the actual park. (The first half of the name comes from the fact that the area was part of an old portage trail between the Des Plaines River and the North branch of the Chicago River used by the Potawatomi Indians.)

Community pride, in addition to need, in this rapidly developing neighborhood prompted the creation of the park. Rapid settlement quickly strained public services and utilities. For example, residents rallied together to demand that the street in front of their homes be paved. These years were characterized by a proliferation of "block clubs" and improvement associations (Ryan 1974, 31). The Dickinson Improvement Association, specifically credited with lobbying for Portage Park, was one of these associations. The group capitalized on the argument that the park would enhance property values as well as provide recreational facilities.

Successful lobbying led to the establishment of the "Old Portage Park District" in 1912. The boundaries of the entire park district were set as Lawrence Avenue on the north, Belmont Avenue on the south, 48th Avenue (now Cicero Avenue) on the east and Austin Avenue on the west. The newly elected board of commissioners promptly set as one of its first goals development of a community recreation center to attract a steady flow of immigrants into the area to live (Ryan 1974, 27).

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The commissioners acquired title to their first tract of land (36.52 acres) after condemnation proceedings at a compensation price of \$50,000 on January 3, 1913. This became the district's first and largest park, soon acquiring the name Portage Park. Starting in 1925 additional park lands were purchased until January 1930, so that a total of four parks--Chopin, Portage, Shabbona and Wilson--made up the Old Portage Park District before 1934 consolidation of the Chicago Park District (Breen 1941).

The neighborhood profile at the time of the park's beginnings was working- to middle-class. By 1920, 60 percent of the homes in the area were owned by resident families, while the comparable figure for Chicago was close to only 25 percent (Ryan 1974, 38). The predominant ethnic groups by 1920 were Scandinavians, Germans and Poles. This socio-economic profile, thus, directed the purpose of the new park district to be more an amenity to a good neighborhood and less a vehicle for social change, in contrast to earlier reform parks in Chicago:

"The [Old Portage Park] District was neither crowded nor poor. Its people were prosperous with private yards with plenty of recreational space. Therefore the commissioners had to develop a program and plan of features which rendered community activities as exclusive park functions like field houses with specialized programs for arts and crafts, baseball diamonds, swimming pools, wading pools, tennis courts, horseshoe pits and skating ponds" (Breen 1941).

As well, as explained in section F III (p. 18) of "The Historic Resources of the Chicago Park District," one of the distinctions of the northwest neighborhood parks is that they were not part of a large park district. This set-up allowed the smaller districts to have greater control and be more focused on the direction they were headed, contributing greatly to the small park's character and reputation as being a main draw of the community.

With land acquired and demands identified, a landscape plan was developed by the American Park Builders in 1912 (Second Annual Portage Park Independence Day Celebration Program 1914). Records and historic photographs indicate that a community house was quickly built near the park's southwest corner; it was torn down probably when the existing fieldhouse was built--in a different location--in 1922. The landscape design provided for tree-lined allees; sunken gardens; a large athletic field; lagoons for boating and skating; outdoor gymnasiums for

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men, women and children; a swimming pool and a sand beach; a fieldhouse and more [A].

The Portage Park landscape design was among the first commissions of American Park Builders Inc., a design/build company created by landscape architect Myron H. West in 1911. Previously, between 1905 and 1911, West had served as the Lincoln Park System General Superintendent. West participated in the Chicago reform park movement during his six-year superintendant tenure and previous years with the park district. During this time he also compiled and authored an extensive 100-page illustrated guide to Lincoln Park.

It is apparent that West's experience with the smaller parks of the Lincoln Park System--Hamlin, Seward, Stanton, Welles--influenced the designs of his company and thus of Portage Park. In general, the Lincoln Park neighborhood park landscapes tended to be less formal and symmetrical than the South parks, and these compositions were less artistically conceived than the Prairie style landscapes of the West Park Commission. A particularly good comparison from the Lincoln Park System to Portage Park is Hamlin Park. This landscape design similarly incorporates a square space with an elliptical ballfield, a building on the diagonal axis, a winding drive and compartmentalized recreation areas along the edges.

West's new firm, American Park Builders Inc., advertised itself as "mainly a construction company, which while maintaining a landscape architectural department, purposes in preference to undertake the actual work of park and landscape construction" ("Publishers Notes" Jan. 1912). Incidentally, the firm was for a brief period initially called the Western Gardening and Forestry Co. ("Personal" April 1911). Another park landscape by American Park Builders Inc. is Kelvyn Park in the Northwest Park District. This original plan, dated 1916, displays layout features similar to Portage Park, such as the round ballfield, a sprawling, connected grouping of lagoons and a building on the diagonal axis with a music court.

Thus, Portage Park's landscape design is indicative of an emerging neighborhood park design at the time. A Park and Cemetary article from 1911 points out the beginnings of a "modern tendency in playground development," consisting of square grounds, one main center for indoor activity and unfenced grounds emphasizing walk entrances and thickly massed shrubbery along the entrances. Although the article does not specifically cite Portage Park, the property clearly fits this "modern tendency."

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After American Park Builders began designing the park, it didn't take long before it became the main attraction of the neighborhood:

"Portage Park soon became the center of the West Irving community. As the site of many well-publicized parades, concerts, social and athletic events, the park had given the neighborhood favorable exposure throughout the city. The park itself ... helped to form a new neighborhood identity among merchants and residents" (Ryan 1974, 30).

By 1917 the neighborhood was named for the park. The local woman's club even fought to have the new local public elementary school named for Portage Park.

The swimming area in particular was a major draw. Park commissioner William A. Becker proposed the construction of an open-air swimming area to be included in the first plan for the park. In late July 1916, this small sand-bottomed lagoon was opened to the public and more than 1,000 bathers turned out to escape the midsummer heat (Ryan 1974, 28). A more complete pool with a sand beach area was opened in 1917 and continued to attract people in droves. The kidney-shaped swimming area was modified over time as concrete edges were installed by 1937, until finally in 1959 an Olympic-sized swimming pool was constructed. The spatial relationship of the pool to the surrounding berms still reflects the location of the historic swimming hole.

Residential and commercial construction soon surrounded the park in the form of 1- and 2-story brick flats. The population of the Portage Park community nearly tripled--attributed to the park and to expanded streetcar service--during the decade of the twenties, essentially reaching maturity at 64,203 residents by 1930 and remaining roughly stable for 30 years after that (The Chicago Fact Book Consortium 1984, 38).

Over time, the commissioners continued work on the park featuring community activities--such as plays, the annual Easter egg hunt and garden club meetings--as exclusive park functions. The park was also heavily used for team sports, swim-a-thons, arts and crafts, and individual recreation such as kite flying or ice skating.

1922 marked the completion of the pool fieldhouse, designed by Clarence Hatzfeld.

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In 1928 a gymnasium of similar Prairie design was constructed. This building design can be attributed to Melvin A. Nelson, who was an architect in Hatzfeld's office at this time (Polk's Chicago City Directory 1923). It is uncertain whether Nelson was the designer or draftsman of the gymnasium, but later record drawings for the building read, "This sheet traced from drawings prepared by Melvin A. Nelson, architect.." The same notation is found on drawings for the three other fieldhouses in the Old Portage Park District (Chicago Park District Special Collections).

Both Portage Park buildings are part of a second generation of the park, meeting further recreational and community demands. The fieldhouse was an important component of the parks of the 19 additional park districts. As explained in the Multiple Property Documentation Form (Section F III, p. 18), clubs and the instruction of hobby activities were extremely popular in the neighborhood parks, leading to a more detailed, permanent fieldhouse design.

The independent northwest park districts tended to hire lesser known architects due to budget limitations. Clarence Hatzfeld (1873-1943) was one of these, but he became well known due to the proliferation of his fieldhouses. In fact, he designed more fieldhouses--21--than any architect for the 19 additional park districts. Hatzfeld was also designing numerous houses and apartment buildings in the adjacent neighborhoods (Section F III: 18). Hatzfeld was trained in the office of Julius Huber, a prominent Chicago architect, and he later shared an office with the influential Dwight H. Perkins of the Prairie School movement.

During the 1920s, Chicago fieldhouses were generally designed in the Revival styles which had gained great popularity and characterized much of the surrounding residential architecture. Portage Park's fieldhouse, however, took a different tack. The materials are similar to Hatzfeld's other park fieldhouses--wire cut variegated brick and limestone sills--but this building style is late Prairie School, with wide overhanging eaves, bands of windows, horizontality and organic details such as in the leaf-like lantern pattern. This is unusual for Hatzfeld, whose most common fieldhouse style was Tudor Revival. Not surprisingly, street after street of Craftsman style bungalows were concurrently rising up around the park.

In the late 1930s, another generation of design affected the park, implemented by the Chicago Park District with Works Progress Administration funds following the 1934 park

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consolidation. This phase included the 1936 construction of stone gateways along the three entries on Irving Park Boulevard, rockeries, display fountains and a pergola [figs. 1, 2, 3 .] Other improvements included flood lights, a comfort station, a spray pool pergola, permanent benches and ballfield bleachers.

The whimsical stonework seemingly was built on top of existing classical concrete elements--planting borders, gateways and fences. The stratified limestone entry gates and low walls on Irving Park Boulevard and the stratified stone coverings on the distinctive pair of existing spray fountains were completed in the fall of 1936. These unusually constructed landscape features lead the park user in and serve as excellent decorative elements. At the time, much more of this stonework was built in the park than what remains today. A pergola and a gateway on Linder Avenue have been removed, but substantial examples of the whimsical, distinctive feature remain and are in good condition. In fact, original flagstone paths off of the southwest allee leading to the spray fountains may still be in place under the grass.

This is one of the examples of this style of stonework to be found in the district, and the in-house designer is unknown. There is, however, a photograph in the Chicago Park District archives with the name Betty McAdam written on the back. McAdam was a graduate of the University of Illinois in landscape architecture and was employed by the Chicago Park District during this time.

The emphasis of many of the WPA-funded programs was modernization and improved infrastructure (Garfield Park National Register Nomination form, 1993). This is reflected in Portage Park by the flood lights and comfort station.

WPA record drawings prepared in 1937 serve as an excellent point of comparison in determining what has occurred to the "green" landscape over time. Generally, the 1937 plan shows that much heavier plantings, from trees to flower gardens to shrubs, were once in existence. Fortunately, the historic spaces for most of this vegetation still exist; for example, the central allee on Irving Park in the 1930s was filled with elaborate flower beds flanked by stone borders, and the lower half of the ballfield was planted with groves of trees.

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Topography, circulation and views in the landscape have held up well. The sunken gardens in the southwest corner and berms along the eastern perimeter remain from the original plan, continuing to well-define space for picnicking or individual recreation such as kite-flying. The overall curvilinear circulation system has been continually moderately rerouted and repaved but generally maintains its original intent. The main view across the ballfield from the gymnasium no longer culminates in heavy groves of trees, but smaller plantings there today maintain the original spatial arrangement.

Despite changes over time, such as severe loss of vegetation and inappropriate modifications to the fieldhouse stairs in 1974, Portage Park is an extremely important and historically intact resource. Throughout its history, Portage Park has successfully responded to the changing demands of the community. For example, the pool went from a mud hole to a concrete-bottom pond to an Olympic-sized pool, which in 1972 hosted the American Olympic team trials. The park is an excellent example of a completely landscaped independent neighborhood park, and reflects the strong neighborhood parks movement, the work of an early landscape design firm, American Park Builders Inc., and prolific park architect Clarence Hatzfeld. Today the grounds and structures are heavily used, going on their ninth decade of responding to the surrounding residents' needs.

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10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Verbal Boundary Description

The property is bounded on the north by the south curb line of Berteau Avenue between North Long Avenue and North Central Avenue; and on the south by the north curb line of West Irving Park Boulevard between North Long Avenue and North Central Avenue; and on the east by the west curb line of North Long Avenue between West Berteau Avenue and West Irving Park Boulevard; and on the west by the east curbline of North Central Avenue between West Berteau Avenue and West Irving Park Boulevard

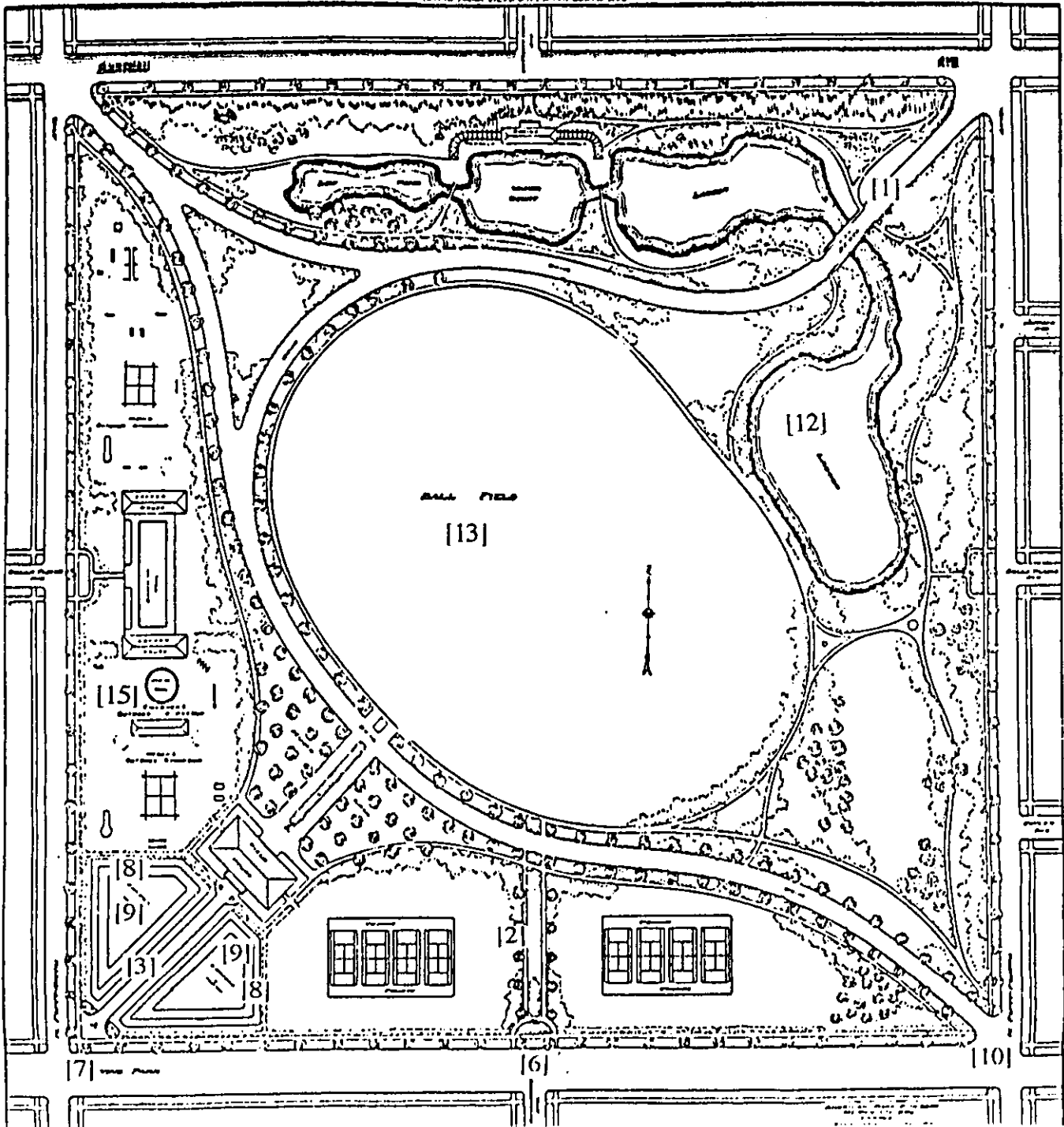
Boundary Justification

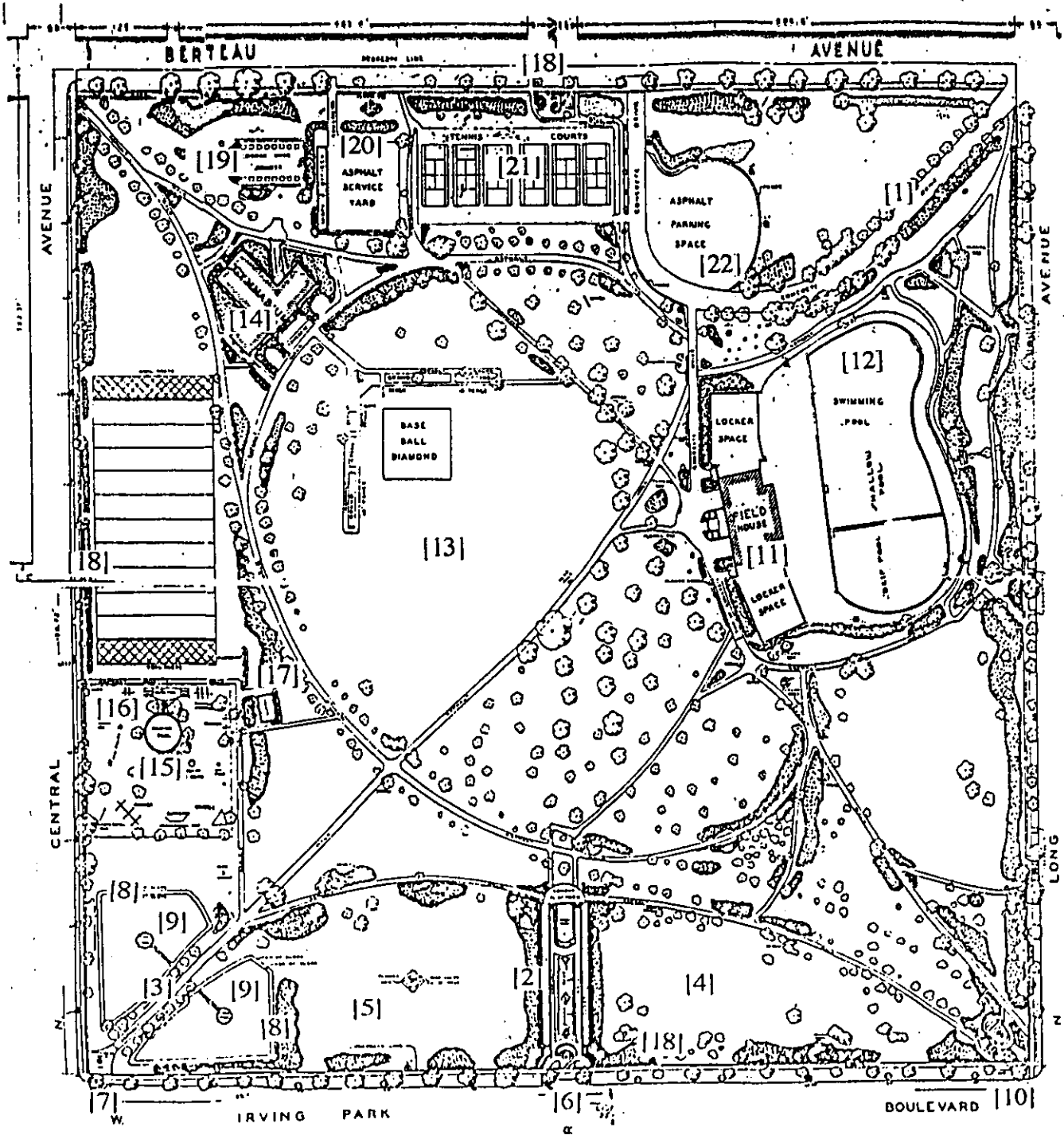
The is the plot of land historically associated with the park during its period of significance.

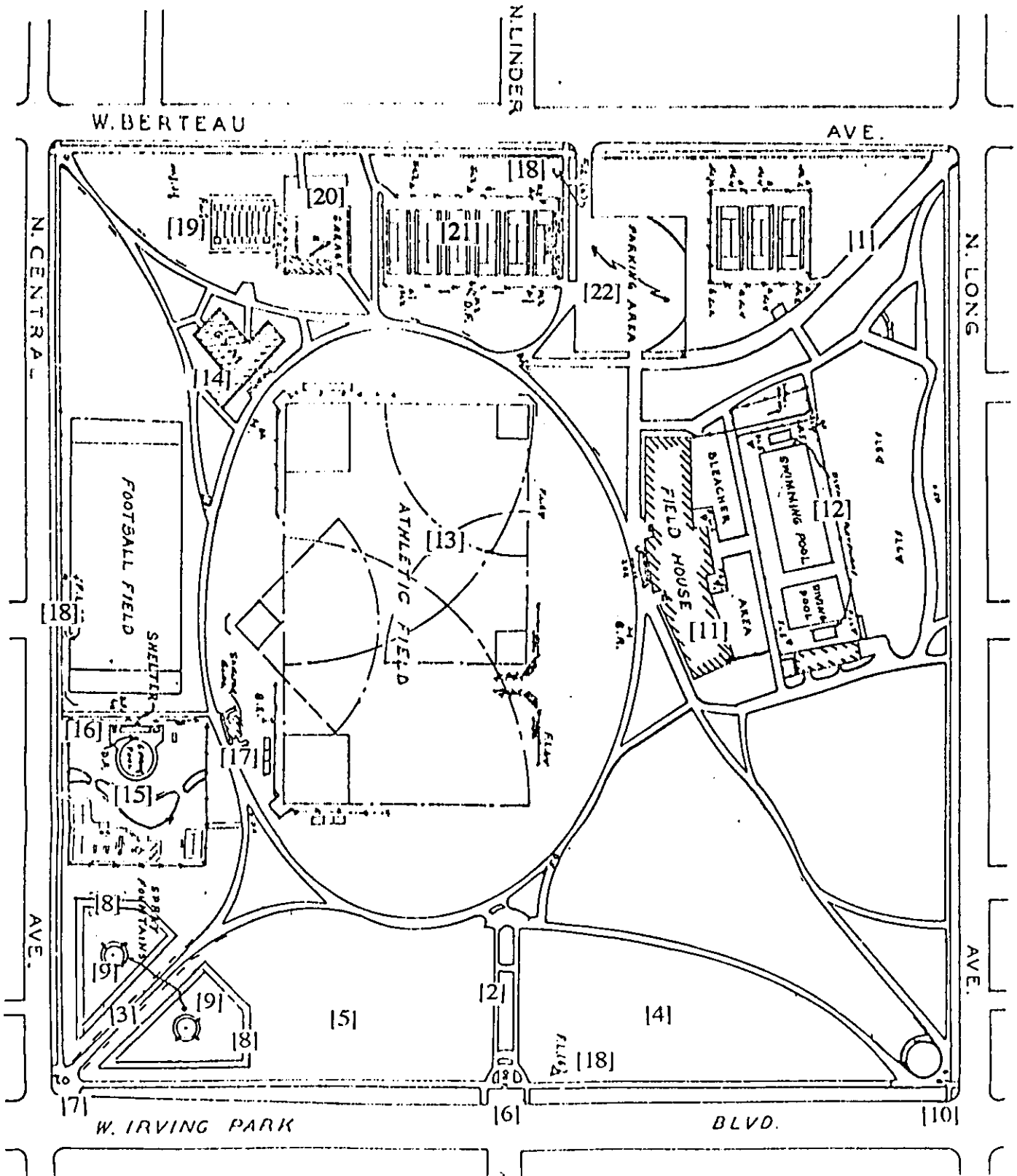
Plan of Portage Park

DESIGNED BY THE AMERICAN PARK BUILDERS

PORTAGE PARK
From Main Plaza to Park Avenue







Portage Park



fig. 3 looking north from Irving Park Boulevard

Portage Park

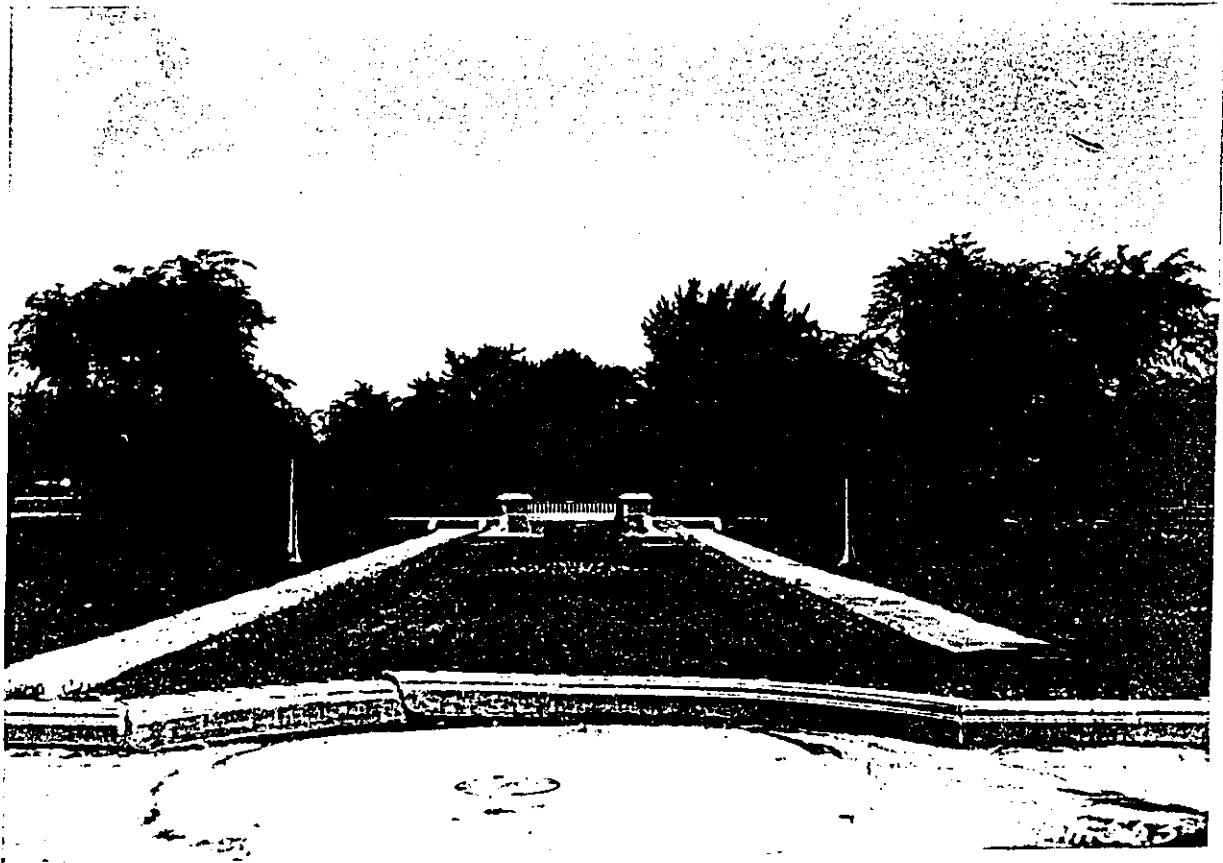


fig. 1 looking north from Irving Park Boulevard

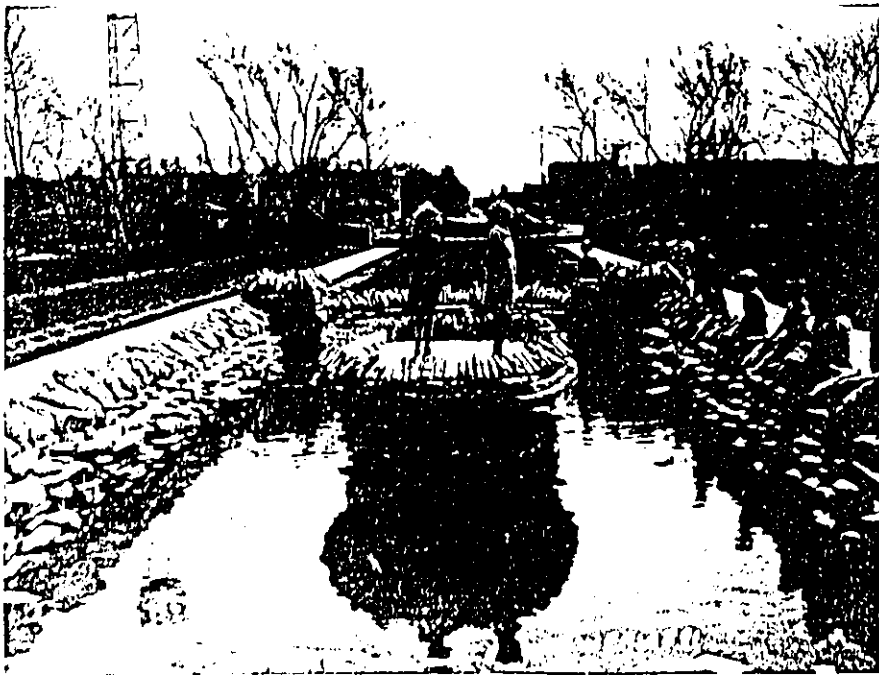


fig. 2 looking south from the pergola



United States Department of the Interior



NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

P.O. Box 37127

Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

IN REPLY REFER TO:

The Director of the National Park Service is pleased to inform you that the following properties have been entered in the National Register of Historic Places. For further information call 202/343-9542.

RECEIVED

MAY 01 1995

Preservation Services
APR 28 1995

WEEKLY LIST OF ACTIONS TAKEN ON PROPERTIES: 4/17/95 THROUGH 4/21/95

KEY: State, County, Property Name, Address/Boundary, City, Vicinity, Reference Number NHL Status, Action, Date, Multiple Name

- ARKANSAS, HOT SPRING COUNTY, Cabin No. 1, Cabin area access rd., Lake Catherine State Park, Shorewood Hills, 95000455, NOMINATION, 4/20/95 (Facilities Constructed by the CCC in Arkansas MPS)
- ARKANSAS, PRAIRIE COUNTY, Prairie County Courthouse, Jct. of Magnolia and Prairie Sts., DeValls Bluff, 95000457, NOMINATION, 4/20/95
- ARKANSAS, WASHINGTON COUNTY, Chi Omega Chapter House, 940 Maple St., Fayetteville, 95000456, NOMINATION, 4/20/95
- COLORADO, EL PASO COUNTY, Calhan Rock Island Railroad Depot, 252 ft. W of Denver St. on Rock Island RR right-of-way, Calhan, 95000476, NOMINATION, 4/20/95
- FLORIDA, PALM BEACH COUNTY, Milton--Mvers American Legion Post No. 65, 263 NE. 5th Ave., Delray Beach, 95000471, NOMINATION, 4/20/95
- FLORIDA, ST. LUCIE COUNTY, Frere, Jules, House, 2404 Sunrise Blvd., Fort Pierce, 95000467, NOMINATION, 4/20/95
- FLORIDA, SUWANNEE COUNTY, Allison, George, House, 418 W. Duval St., Live Oak, 95000369, NOMINATION, 4/20/95
- ILLINOIS, ADAMS COUNTY, South Side German Historic District (Boundary Increase), Roughly bounded by Jefferson, S. 12th, Jackson and S. 5th Sts., Quincy, 95000481, BOUNDARY INCREASE, 4/20/95
- ILLINOIS, CHAMPAIGN COUNTY, Moultrie County Courthouse, 10 S. Main St., Sullivan, 95000489, NOMINATION, 4/20/95
- ILLINOIS, COOK COUNTY, Bryn Mawr Avenue Historic District, Bryn Mawr Ave. from Sheridan Rd. to Broadway, Chicago, 95000482, NOMINATION, 4/20/95
- ILLINOIS, COOK COUNTY, Hamilton Park, 513 W. 72nd St., Chicago, 95000487, NOMINATION, 4/20/95 (Chicago Park District MPS)
- ILLINOIS, COOK COUNTY, Indian Boundary Park, 2500 W. Lunt, Chicago, 95000485, NOMINATION, 4/20/95 (Chicago Park District MPS)
- ILLINOIS, COOK COUNTY, Portage Park, 4100 N. Long Ave., Chicago, 95000484, NOMINATION, 4/20/95 (Chicago Park District MPS)
- ILLINOIS, COOK COUNTY, Riis, Jacob A. Park, 6100 W. Fullerton Ave., Chicago, 95000483, NOMINATION, 4/20/95 (Chicago Park District MPS)
- ILLINOIS, COOK COUNTY, Trumbull Park, 2400 E. 105th St., Chicago, 95000486, NOMINATION, 4/20/95 (Chicago Park District MPS)
- ILLINOIS, MARION COUNTY, Jehle, Louis, House, 511 E. Fifth St., Pana, 95000490, NOMINATION, 4/20/95
- ILLINOIS, MERCER COUNTY, Willits, Levi, House, 202 Main St., New Boston, 95000488, NOMINATION, 4/20/95
- ILLINOIS, WOODFORD COUNTY, Schertz, Joseph, House, IL 116, 1 mi. W of city limits, Metamora vicinity, 95000491, NOMINATION, 4/20/95
- IOWA, HANCOCK COUNTY, Pilot Knob State Park: Portals in Area 5b, Off IA 9 SE of Forest City, y Pilot Knob State Park, Forest City vicinity, 95000362, NOMINATION, 4/17/95 (CCC Properties in Iowa State Parks MPS)
- IOWA, JACKSON COUNTY, Squiers, J. E., House, 418 W. Pleasant St., Maquoketa, 95000385, NOMINATION, 4/20/95 (Maquoketa MPS)
- KANSAS, PAWNEE COUNTY, Babbitt--Doerr House, 423 W. 5th St., Larned, 95000477, NOMINATION, 4/20/95
- MICHIGAN, MARQUETTE COUNTY, Negaunee State Bank Building, 331 Iron St., Negaunee, 95000295, NOMINATION, 4/13/95
- NEW MEXICO, SIERRA COUNTY, Alert--Hatcher Building, Jct. of Second Ave. and Main St., SE corner, Hillsboro, 95000460, NOMINATION, 4/20/95 (Hillsboro MPS)
- NEW MEXICO, SIERRA COUNTY, Bucher, William H., House, 300 W. Main St., Hillsboro, 95000461, NOMINATION, 4/20/95 (Hillsboro MPS)
- NEW MEXICO, SIERRA COUNTY, Mevers House, Main St. N side between 4th and 5th Aves., Hillsboro, 95000463, NOMINATION, 4/20/95 (Hillsboro MPS)
- NEW MEXICO, SIERRA COUNTY, Miller, George Tambling and Ninette Stocker, House, Elenora St. S side, W of Union Church, Hillsboro, 95000465, NOMINATION, 4/20/95 (Hillsboro MPS)
- NEW MEXICO, SIERRA COUNTY, Robins, Will M., House, Jct. of Main St. and Fifth Ave., SW corner, Hillsboro, 95000462, NOMINATION, 4/20/95 (Hillsboro MPS)
- NEW MEXICO, SIERRA COUNTY, Sullivan, Cornelius, House, Jct. of Elenora and First Ave., SW corner, Hillsboro, 95000459, NOMINATION, 4/20/95 (Hillsboro MPS)
- NEW MEXICO, SIERRA COUNTY, Webster, John M., House, Jct. of Main St. and Fifth Ave., SE corner, Hillsboro, 95000464, NOMINATION, 4/20/95 (Hillsboro MPS)
- NEW YORK, CAYUGA COUNTY, House at 15 East Cayuga Street, 15 E. Cayuga St., Moravia, 95000472, NOMINATION, 4/20/95 (Moravia MPS)
- NEW YORK, ESSEX COUNTY, Trudeau Sanatorium, Trudeau Rd., Saranac Lake vicinity, 95000479, NOMINATION, 4/20/95 (Saranac Lake MPS)
- NEW YORK, NIAGARA COUNTY, Bond, Col. William M. and Nancy Ralston, House, 143 Ontario St., Lockport, 95000529, NOMINATION, 4/20/95

Continued on next page